

Alcohol Policy

The Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Texas acknowledge the dangers of alcohol abuse, the seriousness of the illness of addiction as a disrupter of family, economic, and social life, and the need to exercise a healing ministry and offer support to victims of addiction and to their families. Although the responsibility for drinking alcohol always rests with the individual, the Diocese intends by this policy to create an atmosphere where alcohol is not normalized as essential to celebrations, where people who do not drink alcohol feel fully welcomed into the community, and where leadership is encouraged to address the abuse of alcohol when it occurs.

It is the responsibility of the vestry or bishop's committee of each congregation and the board of each school or other diocesan organization to develop, adopt, and publicize a policy in accordance with these guidelines for the use or prohibition of alcoholic beverages. The Recovery Commission of the Diocese of Texas and the diocesan office of Wellness and Care can serve as resources in implementing this policy.

Use of Alcoholic Beverages in Institutions of the Diocese of Texas

Unless otherwise provided, the following guidelines do not apply to the serving of wine at the Eucharist.

1. The institutions of the Diocese of Texas must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery.
2. All applicable federal, state, and local laws must be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors and those forbidding the sale of alcoholic beverages without an appropriate license.
3. Some congregations, schools, or other diocesan organizations may decide not to serve alcohol at events or gatherings. Others may decide to permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at sponsored events. Both can be appropriate if approached mindfully.
4. When alcohol is served, it must be monitored and those showing signs of intoxication should not be served. Whenever alcohol is served, the head of congregation, school, or other diocesan organization must appoint an adult to oversee its serving. That adult must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities. If hard liquor is served, a certified server is required.
5. Serving alcoholic beverages at events where minors are present is strongly discouraged. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.
6. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol does not need to be labeled provided the alcohol is completely evaporated by the cooking process (although it is recommended that the use of alcohol in cooking be noted on a label even in such cases).

7. Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.
8. The serving of alcoholic beverages at sponsored events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event, e.g. “wine and cheese reception,” “cocktail party,” or “beer and wine tasting.”
9. Ministries inside or outside of congregations, schools, or other diocesan organizations will make certain that alcohol consumption is not the focus of the ministry and that drinking alcohol is not an exclusively normative activity.
10. Food must be served when alcohol is present.
11. In congregations, the groups or organizations sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the head of congregation or from the vestry or bishop’s committee. Such groups or organizations must also assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may be impaired. Consulting with liability insurance carriers is advised.
12. Because alcohol is a mood-altering drug, alcoholic beverages may not be served when the business of the Church is being conducted.
13. Clergy shall consecrate an appropriate amount of wine when celebrating the Eucharist and perform ablutions in a way that does not foster or model misuse.
14. We encourage clergy to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind.
15. It is expected that the leadership of each congregation will be aware of local resources and programs that can provide assistance to persons struggling with addiction and to their families.